
From Intellectual Courage to Moral Courage

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A COMMENTARY ON D. R. Comer and M. Schwartz (2015), “Highlighting Moral Courage in the Business Ethics Course,” *J Bus Ethics* 146(3): 703–723, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2919-3>

ABSTRACT

Comer and Schwartz argue that the business ethics course should aim to cultivate moral courage within our students. Essential to their argument is the use of fictional exemplars of moral courage to motivate our students. I argue that the classroom, even when supplemented by good fiction, is not the right context by which to practice moral courage—the habituation of moral courage requires a context of risk. I suggest a virtue that can be practiced in the classroom—intellectual courage. By aiming at this virtue, we will also get the virtue of moral courage.

IN THEIR “HIGHLIGHTING Moral Courage in the Business Ethics Course,” Comer and Schwartz (2015) argue that moral courage is one essential virtue that we should attempt to cultivate in our business ethics courses. The problem is that we should not expect just any business ethics course to deliver this good. Instead, they argue that building the course around fictional stories highlighting protagonists who excel in moral courage is, at least, one way to have our business ethics courses develop moral courage within our students. While I am sympathetic to much of their discussion, I argue that they still can’t

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